

**IOWA ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT (IAA)**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*Revised 8/24/09*

**IAA Policy**

1. **Is parental permission required for students with disabilities to participate in the Iowa Alternate Assessment process?** Not directly. Parents are members of the IEP team and will be involved in IEP team decisions on how an individual student will participate in accountability assessment programs.
2. **Should a copy of the completed rating scales be placed in the student's cumulative folder?** No. Only the rating scale **results** should be placed in the cumulative folder. Rating scales and evidence can be destroyed in September of each new school year.
3. **What content areas and grades does the IAA assess?** Reading is assessed at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. Math is assessed at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. Science is assessed at grades 5, 8, and 11.
4. **Do grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 9, 10, and 12 need to be assessed in the IAA process?** The state's accountability system requires students to be tested in grades 3-8 & 11. No Student Profile is required for students in Kindergarten, 1, 2, 9, 10, and 12. The state does not require an alternate assessment at these grade levels.
5. **Can the IEP be used as the alternate assessment?** *No Child Left Behind* in Non-Regulatory Guidance to states is quite clear. The IEP cannot be used as an alternate assessment.
6. **What does a district do if they are over the 1% limit?** The Department will contact the district and send them a 1% exemption request form.
7. **Can parents refuse to have their child included in the alternate assessment?** No. All students must be assessed under NCLB regulations, if not in the general statewide assessment, then in the alternate assessment. However, if the local school district has a policy to allow parent requests to not test students, this policy should extend to parents of children with disabilities. Parents of enrolled students need to know that if their child does not take the alternate assessment, they are counted as exclusions under NCLB, which could eventually cause problems for districts in making AYP.

- 8. What does 1% of the alternate assessment mean?** NCLB does not limit the percent of students able to take the alternate assessment. The IEP team decides a student's participation. Any student taking the alternate assessment is counted in the participation rate. However, you can only use a maximum of 1% of the IAA proficient scores at the district level toward meeting district adequate yearly progress (AYP). The 1% refers to the percent of students (in all tested grades combined) taking the alternate assessment that may be able to be counted as proficient for AYP purposes. There is no limit at the building level.
- 9. Can teachers who do not have their Strategist II license assess students in the alternate assessment?** Yes, they can provide instruction to their students in order to fulfill the requirements of the alternate assessment process. Teachers who are working on their Strategist II or need to secure their Strategist II must fulfill all the requirements of the Licensure board of the Educational Examiners at the Department and their local school district.

### IAA Process

- 10. Who inputs IAA rating scale data into the IAA system?** The teacher who is responsible for instruction for the student inputs the data.
- 11. Do the IAA rating scales need to be given to the parents?** No. However, the teacher should review the completed rating scales with parents or they can be reviewed during the IEP meeting. If the parents want a copy of the rating scales, teachers can print off a copy for them or they can print a copy from the department's [IAA webpage](#).
- 12. I just received a student in my classroom and I won't have the full testing window to complete the IAA on this student, what should I do?** Students who move in for part of the school year are still required to receive instruction in the general education curriculum.
- a. I had a student move in to my classroom before January 1<sup>st</sup>, what should I do?** Complete a Student Profile, teach and gather evidence, and report performance in March. The principal or designee completes the assurance process.
  - b. I had a student move into my classroom after December 31<sup>st</sup>, what should I do?** Teach the student the general curriculum. You do not need to enter the student into the Student Profile. Do not report scores in March. If the student is still on your roster the following school year and continues in Alternate

Assessment, enter the student as a participant for the next testing window at that time and make sure the FAY questions on the Student Profile are checked correctly..

**13. I had a student move out of my classroom. What should I do?** There is no transfer student process as there was in years past prior to 2009-2010!

- a. If you did not enter the student into the Student Profile, do so now. Be sure to record the date that the student first attended your classroom. If the student is already in the Student Profile database, go to step 13b.
- b. Log into the Student Profile system, and on your roster, find the student. Click on the “Remove” link associated to the student. Follow the on-screen instructions to complete the transfer process.
- c. Complete the online Transfer Form.
- d. Instruction on academic content should have been occurring since the start of the school year, and the teacher should have some data upon which ratings can be based.
  - i. Enter what you can on the rating scales. The student may count as a participant in your district under certain conditions (see question 14).
  - ii. If you have no evidence, you must indicate that you have no data to report and are aware that the student will earn a score of zero if the student counts as a participant in your building. If you indicate that you are not sure, you will be prompted to contact Steve Maurer at the Iowa Department of Education to discuss the situation for that student. The student will be an exclusion if the student’s adequate yearly progress data stays with your district.
  - iii. After you have successfully completed the steps above, you will receive a confirmation email of the transfer.

**14. For students who move, how will participation and performance be determined?**

Students who move within district or stay in Iowa, will count for participation with the district that had the students the majority of the school year based on the number of days from first day of instruction, to exit (or end of the school year). Unless the student moved to another roster within the same school building, in most cases students will not meet full academic year in either the move-out building or the move-in building and neither building will be held accountable for the student performance

- a. Students who move within district might meet full academic year in the district, and if so, will be included for performance at the district level. The performance for the setting in which the student was assigned the most calendar days, will be scored for adequate yearly progress purposes (but not included in building accountability).
- b. Students who move within a school building might meet full academic year for the building, and if so, will be included for performance at both the building and district levels. The performance for the setting in which the student was assigned the most calendar days, will be scored for adequate yearly progress purposes.

- 15. A student passed away. What do I do?** Enter the IAA system. Find the student on your roster. Click on “remove.” Click “deceased” as the reason. You do not need to report performance data on the student. The student counts for neither participation nor performance for that school year.
- 16. What is the IAA Assurance Process?** IAA has an assurance process to attest that the process was followed with integrity. An independent reviewer examines the evidence and, if agreement that the teacher followed the process with integrity, signs the assurance form. If the principal does not agree with the teacher documentation, then the principal needs to exclude the student on the online Assurance Form. The department contacts building administrators attesting to exclusion to verify the accuracy of the exclusion.
- 17. Who completes the Assurance Form online?** The principal or designee completes this process. **The assurance process will be automated this year.** The principal or designee will receive an email notification to complete an assurance form when all rating scales for a student are completed. He/she will receive an email confirmation, after the assurance form has been completed successfully. The principal or designee should print a copy and retain for their records.
- 18. Are functional and access skills on student’s IEPs measured in the IAA?** The focus of the alternate assessment is on academics as represented by the Iowa Core Content Standards and Benchmarks.
- 19. Can a student participate in the IAA in one content area and participate in the ITBS in another content area?** Yes. Students who can meaningfully participate in any portion of the general assessment should do so.
- 20. How is the above decision represented in the student’s IEP?** Page G allows for a complete description of how the student is being assessed. This will assist parents to understand how their child will participate in district-wide assessments.
- 21. Do I need to complete a Student Profile if my student is participating in one content area in the IAA and another in the ITBS/ITED?** Yes, Make sure you indicate the correct content area when completing a Student Profile.
- 22. What is the testing period for the IAA?** From the start of school to March 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 23. What does grade mean?** It means the grade the student is currently in.
- 24. We do not use grades but group students according to their ages?** You must identify a grade for each student based on the ages of non-disabled students in particular grades.
- 25. Do my districts standards and benchmarks need to align to the rating scale items?** No. The Department has already aligned the rating scale items with the state’s Core Content Standards and Benchmarks (CCSBs) and districts have assured the Department of Education that their standards include the CCSBs.
- 26. Should we assess a student who comes to school only 2-3 hours per day?** Yes. Each

student should have access to the general education curriculum on a regular basis.

**27. Should an alternate assessment be given to a student who spends all day in a hospital?** Yes. If appropriate, this student should be receiving hospital/homebound instruction. In this case, it would be appropriate for this student to take the alternate assessment.

**28. Must I still use the +/- 2 grade levels strategy when assessing students in the IAA?** +/-2 years was an original requirement of portfolio scoring and was considered a guideline on how to adapt instructional materials. **+/-2 years is NO longer a requirement nor considered an appropriate approach to adapting instructional materials.** The IAA is comprised of identified content that is aligned to grade level content standards, but is representative of reduced performance standards (alternate academic achievement standards). Since the Department has identified the grade-level link, there is no more need to use the +/-2 year for adapting instructional materials. Teachers are encouraged to use the 5-Step process for Accessing the Iowa Core Curriculum Unit/Lesson Planning Tool, using student's Symbolic Levels of Communication to adapt grade level material. In regard to the student's response format, age-appropriateness is the preferred criteria.

### **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**

**29. Can a student be exempted from the Iowa Alternate Assessment?** No! Every student is to be tested, even those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (even those with medical conditions – teachers are to teach at least one item in each content area).

Not testing certain students will affect a local school district's participation and *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* rates. An IEP Team cannot make the decision to opt out students from the Iowa Alternate Assessment (IAA).

Teachers should do their best with medical needs that result in frequent absences or who's medical needs impact their attention span. Students who are receiving homebound instruction must be assessed also, even, if only a few skills are taught and assessed. Remember, the assessment is a year-long process, so to say, "we need to exclude this child from the testing window" means that the child is being excluded from participating in the general curriculum.

**30. Another district in Iowa has tuitioned the student into our district. Does that district enter the rating scale data? Does that district get the results of the alternate assessment?** The teacher who is implementing the IEP in the *attending* district is responsible for completing the IAA process including rating scale data entry.

If the student is a tuition-in student from another school district, the attending district must share the IAA information with the resident district. The resident district has tuitioned the student to the attending district and the resident district still has a responsibility to ensure that a child receives a free and appropriate public education even though the resident district is paying another district to provide the free and appropriate public education described within the IEP. IAA results for tuitioned-in students will be returned to the resident district. **When districts have a 28E agreement for service, the student's performance and participation goes to the sending district, not the attending district.**

**31. A student is open enrolled into our school district. Which district "gets" the student's score?** An open enrolled student counts for participation and performance (if full academic year is met) in the attending district.

**32. For accountability purposes, how are home-schooled students, foster care students, out of state placements, and residential placements treated in the IAA?** Home school students fall under their own rules and regulations associated with competent private instruction. They are not counted as full time equivalency (FTE) by the local school district and would not be a part of the district's local accountability system.

Foster Placement students have been placed by the court system and if they do not attend a public school, their scores would roll up to the state level.

Out-of-State Placements are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The most likely scenario would be that they were placed by the court system out of state. More than likely these students would not be counted in the local district's accountability system. If the district was a part of the decision to send a student out of state then that sending district must make sure the student is tested (other state's test not the IAA) and the scores sent back to the district.

In-State Private Residential Placements: if a local district was involved in this decision and a 28E agreement was executed, then the score(s) for that student in the residential facility should come back to the sending district. If a parent made a unilateral decision or open enrolled to this facility then the district educating that student would keep the score in that district.

- 33. Are students in accredited nonpublic schools included in AYP?** Nonpublic school students, even if they are shared time, are not included in AYP decisions.
- 34. How many days can a student miss school to not be considered for a full-academic year?** If the student was enrolled on the first day of the testing period the previous year and is still enrolled on the first day of testing for the current school year, full academic year applies. Only if the student was dropped from the enrollment rolls of the school or district is the student considered not continuously enrolled for the full academic year.
- 35. How do we count students for AYP decisions if they are open-enrolled (parent decision)?** Open enrolled students count for participation and performance (if full academic year is met) in the attending district.
- 36. How do we count students for AYP decisions if they are tuitioned in or out of our district?** Tuition in/out students counts for participation and performance (if full academic year is met) in the resident (sending) district. However, participation and performance of tuition-out students count only at the district level of the resident district (not at the building level).
- 37. How do we count students who have been court adjudicated for AYP decisions?** If the student attends a school district that is under the jurisdiction of a local school board, that student counts in that district, but at the district level only. If a court adjudicates a student out of your district and your district is no longer responsible for the student's education and is not paying tuition to another district/institution for the student's education, you will not be held accountable for that student.
- 38. What are cut scores?** Cut scores are used to determine if a student scores "basic," "proficient," or "advanced" on the alternate assessment. When you enter your data on the rating scales into our electronic calculator, the calculator will determine a cut score and then indicate if the student is basic, proficient, or advanced. You can use the cut scores as a way to determine before you enter data what the proficiency level of each student might be.
- 39. What are Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)?** Performance level descriptors are statements of skills that constitute basic, proficient, and advanced performance. PLDs are developed by expert panelists, including teachers. As the alternate assessment process evolves, teachers are now understanding what "basic," "proficient," and "advanced" skills represent, and the Department of Education will be working on the PLDs during the 2009-2010 school year so these PLDs more accurately describe the abilities of students taking the alternate assessment. **It is anticipated that PLDs will change for the 2010-2011 school year but not before then.**

**40. What constitutes exclusion?** There is one condition for being an exclusion: If the Department receives a rating scale but no assurance form, the Department will contact the teacher and building administrator. If no assurance form is received, the child is counted as an exclusion for participation and performance.